

Let's Save Our Pioneer Heritage

Editorials

■ The time has surely arrived to take stock of our pioneer heritage—for we may be losing it.

By pioneer heritage is meant things or ideals of community or personal value which were passed down to the present generation by the pioneers who settled this region. This could mean a host of things, but at the moment we are speaking of old churches, homes, schools, municipal buildings, vehicles, furniture, clothing and personal possessions.

It doesn't require much stock-taking to discover that pioneer places of worship, schools, stores, homes and irreplaceable relics are passing from the scene without our realizing they are lost forever.

A classic example is the old Salt Lake theater, the Social Hall and the old Salt Lake County court house. At this very moment, the residents of Heber City are pondering whether to save or demolish the Heber City Tabernacle, a pioneer-built edifice. To destroy it "would be tragic," declares Dr. Everett L. Cooley, Director of the Utah State Historical Society. Presently the fate of this pioneer church building hangs in the balance.

Today's threats to our heritage of pioneer-designed and constructed buildings are shopping centers, high-speed freeways, sub-divisions and gas stations. Of what earthly use, say many of this modern age, of yesterday's old church or mansion that occupies the best possible site in town for a gas station. "Let's tear it down! We can't stand in the way of progress."

PROGRESS, part of our life, calls for changes, but we must not sever the ties that connect us with our pioneer ancestry. It's past time for a serious look at what to save—and what to tear down and forget.

Historic preservation is especially important to Utahns, for the colonization of Utah by Mormon people is unique in United States history. In few other places in our country was religion the sole motivating force which promoted settlement to the extent it was here. Here our forefathers gathered in an isolated and unfriendly wilderness in order to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience.

The price paid was a tremendous one: it cost thousands of lives, untold hardships, mob violence, isolation, suffering, hunger and hard work. Therefore we should not lose sight of the feelings, the idealism and the spirituality of our ancestors. The best we can do is to preserve the things of that era to remind us of our heritage.

WITHOUT FURTHER ado, we would like to suggest that a state-wide committee be appointed to take a "look at historic preservation." We have too many personal ties with our pioneer past to neglect this move. Let this committee have a look at every town in the State, and let them come up with recommendations on "what to save."

The time will come when the historic Tabernacle in Brigham City will face the

same fate as the one in Heber City. The same can be said of historic church buildings all the way from Richmond on the north to Santa Clara and Bluff on the south.

And let us not stop with church buildings. Let's also take a look at—just for example—some of the well preserved pioneer-built homes in the Logan, Willard, and Ogden areas, the Davis County, Salt Lake County, Utah County areas, and on south to Payson Santaquin, Nephi, Gunni-

son, Salina, Richfield, Circleville, Panamint, and Orderville. Also, let's survey pioneer structures in Fillmore, Kanosh, Beaver, Paragonah, Parowan, Cedar City, St. George, Hurricane and that area, not to forget Delta, Loa, Price, Castledale, Moab, Monticello, Bluff and Blanding, and Cialville, Duchesne and Vernal.

Let us then become serious on this matter of "historic preservation"; let us take action before "progress" leaves us without a trace of the men and women who worked, starved and suffered to lay the foundation of modern day Utah.